

Priest accused of abuse

■ A boy who worked at a Greece church says the man forced him to engage in sex.

BY STAFF WRITER
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GREECE — A longtime Catholic priest, who has been on personal leave since last summer, was arrested yesterday and charged with four counts of sodomy.

The Rev. William Lum, 53, turned himself in to the Greece Police Department at 9 a.m. yesterday. He was accompanied by his attorney, John Speranza of Rochester.

Lum pleaded not guilty to felony charges of third-degree

sodomy in Town Court and was released on his own recognizance.

The arrest came after an investigation by the Monroe County District Attorney's Office. Neither arresting officer Gary Schultz nor Assistant District Attorney Alecia Elston would comment on the case.

The charges stem from several meetings between Lum and a boy younger than 17 that allegedly occurred between June 15 and July 1, 1992.

The boy, who referred to Lum as "Father Bill" in a sworn statement filed with the court, met the priest when he worked as a receptionist in the rectory at St. Joseph's Church in Penfield. Lum served as an administrator at the church for five months in 1991.

The abuse, however, allegedly took place after the priest left for a permanent assignment at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Greece. The boy wrote that he agreed to help with gardening at the church.

In the court papers, the boy said that Lum forced him to engage in oral and anal sex on more than one occasion.

The boy's deposition also said he begged Lum to stop and that the priest said "he knew I was enjoying this."

The silver-haired priest, wearing a blue suit and tan trench coat, was handcuffed when he appeared before Town Justice David Michael Barry. He kept his head down and barely spoke above a whisper during most of the 10-minute arraignment.

Afterward, Lum refused to comment. "At this point, he's really not going to say anything at all," Speranza said. "We just need the time to review the allegations."

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Priest

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Lum was ordained in June 1969 by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, said Liz Brown, spokeswoman for the Diocese of Rochester. His most recent assignment was at Our Lady of Mercy Church on Armstrong Road in Greece, from which he took personal leave in July 1996.

He explained his decision to take some time off in a July 14 letter to parishioners.

"The problem is not that there are stresses and pressures in the Church or in life," he wrote. "There certainly are. But you and many others face those pressure and stresses. Priests have to deal with stress and dissonance in the Church. Everyone faces various pressures and stresses. The issue is how I have been dealing or failing to deal with those pressures and stresses, how I have been handling those things."

Calls to the 894-family church were referred to the diocese.

The diocese issued a three-paragraph statement in response to questions about the priest's arrest.

"It is diocesan policy when an allegation of sexual misconduct has been made to offer financial support for the complainant's counseling," diocese officials wrote. "The Diocese offers such assistance out of pastoral concern, without regard to the eventual determination as to the validity of a complaint. The complainant is receiving such assistance."

Lum currently lives in the rectory at St. Stanislaus Church in Rochester.

The arrest comes just a few months after another priest, the Rev. Eugene Emo, pleaded guilty to a single count of first-degree sexual abuse involving a developmentally disabled young man. Under terms of a plea bargain, he faces up to one year in jail and is due back in court April 28.

Dr. Richard Sipe, a psychotherapist at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and a former Catholic priest, said 6 percent of Catholic priests get sexually involved with minors.

At Speranza's request, Barry granted a one-month adjournment in the case.

Lum is due back in court at 1 p.m. May 21. □